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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001833

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: SADR CITY RESIDENTS COMPLAIN ABOUT SECURITY

REF: BAGHDAD 01684

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD

¶1. (C) At a May 25 meeting, five Sadr City residents told PolOffs that they were disappointed the security situation had not improved over the past year, and not hopeful that it would improve in the upcoming months. "You can not even trust your own neighbor these days," said Huda, a young female resident who noted that the influx of displaced Shia moving into Sadr City had made the neighborhoods more anonymous. A middle-aged Sayyed (i.e., descendant of the Prophet Mohammad) agreed and added that the Jafari government had not been able to help with security and so he did not have high expectations for the next government. One female resident in her early forties said that the situation was worse for women than men because every day they lived in fear that their husbands, sons, or brothers would not come home. A resident working at the General Information Center (GIC) said family anxieties over missing relatives was a situation he faced often, especially since the families are never certain whether their relatives had been kidnapped or arrested by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

SECURITY POOR, RESIDENTS MISS NEIGHBORLINESS

¶2. (C) During the session, all five residents told PolOffs that they lived their days worried about security either from car bombs, gunfights or any other violent activity. They all agreed that every Sadr City resident now lives in fear of their neighbors. Gone, they said, were the days when they lived next to the same neighbors for 20 years and developed a deep sense of mutual trust. With many displaced Shia moving into Sadr City (ref), said Huda, the neighbors are even more anonymous and it is hard to know whether they mean well or not. Another female resident in her forties bemoaned the days when neighbors were close and when other groups such as Sabeans and Christians lived in the area, side by side with Shia.

¶3. (C) The Shia residents characterized the police in Sadr City as ineffective, but insisted that they were not an object of fear. When the topic of militias came up, one member of the group asserted that militias did not exist in Sadr City despite another member having just mentioned the Jaysh al-Mehdi in passing moments before. In an aside to PolOff, one of the male members commented that because of fear, many residents will not admit the existence of the militias in the presence of US personnel.

MISSING OR DETAINED?

14. (C) A resident working at the GIC who identified himself as Nsaif told Poloff that every weekend, families stream in to the District Council's office to report missing family members. The families fill out forms but often are unsuccessful in locating their family members. Nsaif said that according to the accounts from the reporting residents, many of those missing appear to have been detained by Iraqi security forces. In such cases he said, it is almost impossible to discover the location of the missing persons. He expressed frustration with the ISF's inability to adequately track the location or even existence of their detainees. The worst part for the families, he said, is not knowing if missing family members are alive or dead.

DAILY LIVING AS IMPORTANT AS SECURITY

15. (C) The residents all agreed that lack of electricity and other basic services was one of the worst problems they faced in daily life. One resident noted that electricity was only available four hours per day. One elderly gentleman took out a plastic bag filled with medicines and complained that he had trouble getting medical care and could barely afford his medicine. Another complained that her property had been damaged in a gunfight, and she still suffered the trauma of that day and of having to leave a

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property too damaged to live in. All the residents made a plea that the US help provide services to their community.

COMMENT

16. (C) The participants of the group included three males ranging in age from 30 to 70, one woman in her twenties and a second woman in her forties. Some of the participants refused to give their names. Because this group was not large, it does not necessarily portray a complete picture of how Sadr City residents feel. We came away from this meeting, however, with the impression of a diminished sense of hope compared with previous Sadr City meetings that we have conducted. We also found noteworthy the apparent lack of interest in the new government. None of the residents were interested in talking about the new government or willing to express a strong opinion. They appeared more concerned with the day to day problems they are facing.

KHALILZAD